



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND STRATEGIC PLANNING DEPARTMENT

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: March 30, 2007

TO: Ray Giometti, Planning Commission Chair
Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Don Erickson, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: CPA #2007-M-03, Maple Valley Highway Corridor

DESCRIPTION:

This City sponsored map amendment will evaluate King County Comprehensive Plan land use designations and zoning vis-à-vis Renton Comprehensive Plan land use designations and zoning in the Maple Valley - SR-169. The area under consideration extends east of the recently annexed Maplewood Addition and generally includes all properties fronting or accessing from SR-169, out to the Urban Growth Boundary, near 184th Avenue SE, if extended (see Exhibit 1, Vicinity Map).

ISSUE SUMMARY:

1. Should Renton change its Comprehensive Plan designation of Residential Low Density (RLD) adopted in 1993 to better reflect development that has occurred in the area in the ensuing years?
2. Should Renton's Comprehensive Plan designation for this area reflect an approach consistent to King County development or continue with existing Renton policy?
3. Should individual parcels in the subject area be prezoned, consistent with these land use designations, thereby facilitating future annexation and improving land use predictability?

ANALYSIS:

In 1993 as part of the first GMA Comprehensive Plan Renton designated the entire Maple Valley portion of the Potential Annexation Area in the Residential Low Density (RLD) land use designation. See Exhibit 2, Renton Comprehensive Plan.

The RLD designation purpose is to guide development on land appropriate for a range of low intensity residential and employment where land is either constrained by sensitive areas or where the City could add large lot housing stock at urban densities of 4 dwelling units per net acre to its housing inventory.

This area was designated RLD because the large parcels had a combination of constrained and unconstrained lands extending from the Valley floor to the steep hillsides surrounding the area. At the time several there was an opportunity for single family, larger lot projects, and lower density development in areas with environmental constraints. In addition Renton multi-family policy does not support development of multi-family housing in outlying areas more difficult to serve with urban levels of service such as transit, recreation, and close and convenient shopping.

When the area was designated Residential Low Density (RLD) by Renton in the early 1990s, much of the area was underdeveloped with some of it in agricultural and recreation (Aqua Barn) uses. Over the intervening years, under the County's zoning system, the area has been built out with a number of medium density developments and some single-family. This overall development pattern is not consistent with the Renton RLD designation.

Last year the City changed the Renton Comprehensive Plan for a small portion of the area, the former Aqua Barn site, to allow Commercial Corridor (CC) on the front three acres and Residential Medium Density on the rear 16-acres. This work was done in recognition of the changes instituted by King County in rezoning this area for commercial and mixed-use development in approximately 1996. The remaining 14-acres of the former Aqua Barn property uphill remained RLD. The City and the property owner also entered into a development agreement for the commercially designated front 3-acres that stipulated the type and quality of development envisioned for it.

KING COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ZONING:

King County's Comprehensive Plan designates the majority of the area on the south side of SR-169, Urban Residential, medium, 4-12 du/ac. The 3-acre area on the north side of the highway east of Ron Regis Park and west of the new 152nd Avenue SE bridge is designated Greenbelt/Urban Separator (see Exhibit 2, Comprehensive Plans).

Exhibit 3 shows the current County zoning designations throughout the study area. The front portion of the New Life Church site and properties on the south side of SR-169 are zoned R-4, four units per gross acre. The three manufactured home sites are zoned R-12, twelve units per gross acre, and the upland portion of the New Life Church site is zoned R-1, one unit per gross acre. The smaller area on the north side of SR-169 is zoned UR, one unit per five acres.

There are several significant differences between County zoning and the zoning that would result if the Renton Comprehensive Plan land use were implemented.

- 1) The County's R-4 zone allows bonuses up to six units per gross acre while Renton's R-4 zone only allows four dwelling units per net acre with no bonus. The County's R-12 zone allows bonuses up to 18 units per gross acre. Thus, the R-4 in King County can be almost as dense as Renton's R-8 zone and the R-12 zone is almost as dense as Renton's R-14 zone (which allows a bonus to 18 du/net acre).

- 2) County zoning allows the development density to be clustered on one portion of a site and density credit is given for environmentally constrained areas retained in open space. This development pattern does not occur in the Renton zoning system because Renton standards do not allow transfer of development rights from critical areas to other parts of a site.
- 3) County zoning allows multi-family use in all zones R-4 and above. As a consequence of the density transfer and multi-family allowance, it is possible for a higher density cluster of multi-family use to be built in County zones that appear with lower density designations on a zoning map. Renton zoning does not allow multi-family units on parcels zoned for less than ten dwelling units per net acre.

Exhibits 5 and 6 depict the development pattern created over the last decade of development under the County policy approach. Exhibit 5 depicts the existing density of development throughout the study area on a parcel basis. Densities are depicted as gross density per acre in ranges of 0-0.9 du/ac, 1-3.9 du/ac, 4-5.9 du/ac, 6-7.9 du/ac, 8-9.9 du/ac, 10-11.9 du/ac, and 12 du/ac and above. As can be seen from these exhibits the sites with highest density are either existing manufacture housing parks or existing multi-family developments.

Exhibit 6 depicts the existing density of development throughout the study area on a parcel basis but with the densities shown as net densities. The same ranges are shown on this exhibit as the previous one. Generally, net density is considered as 1.25 times gross density. On a parcel basis, Wonderland Estates, the Molasses Creek Condominiums, and Valley Springs Apartments have the highest densities, based upon gross acreage. Wonderland Estates, a mobile home part has a density of 11.6 units per net acre, Molasses Creek Condominiums has an estimated net density of 19 units per net acre, and Valley Spring Apartments, on the former Aqua Barn site, has an estimated net density of over 25 units per net acre.

EXISTING DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY:

Below is a table with some of the current post-1993 development found along the highway in the study area.

Name of Project	KC Zone	Acreage of Project	Number of Units	Gross Density	Estimated Net Density
Molasses Creek Condominiums	R-6	9.63 acres	146 units	15.61 units/acre	19.5 units/acre
Cedarwood Apartments	R-6	31.8 acres	141 units	4.43 units/acre	11.95 units/acre
Wonderland Estates Mobile Home Park	R-12	12.21 acres	113 units	9.25 units/acre	11.56 units/acre
Valley Springs Apartments	R-12	3.73 acres	96 units	25.7 units/acre	32.13 units/acre

River Valley Condominiums	R-12	8.93 acres	151 units	16.9 units/acre	21.13
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These developments are all medium density or higher multi-family development. In addition, two other manufactured housing parks are developed in this area and are also all higher density than the R-4 zoning allowed under the RLD designation. There also is a single-family detached subdivision with an estimated net density of 4.3 units per acre, only slightly higher than what would be allowed under the Renton R-4 zone.

VACANT LAND:

In terms of future development potential, there are only an estimated 7.1 acres that remain vacant. The 57.3-acre New Life Church site is relatively underdeveloped but future expansion of the church is anticipated on it. Also, it should be noted that one of the manufactured home parks, Wonderland Estates, has been proposed for redevelopment as multifamily, townhouse style, units.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS:

Only a portion of the area has environmental constraints. This is primarily the steeper sloped area on the southern portion of the lots fronting on the Renton – Maple Valley Highway (SR-169). Occasionally, portions of the area do flood, particularly portion on the north side of the highway. The County has designated the area east of Ron Regis Park, on the north side of highway that is subject to flooding, Greenbelt/Urban Separator (see Exhibit 7, Slopes).

However, much of the area does not have environmental constraints and those portions of the site have developed much higher densities under County zoning since 1993. As a condition of these higher densities the County has required most developers to set aside critical areas, such as those with slopes greater than 25%, as open space tracts. As shown on Exhibit 6, only a relative small portion of the study area currently has net densities of 4 units per acre or less.

NEXT STEPS:

Staff is currently identifying areas within the study area having sufficient environmental constraints or development patterns to remain RLD. We are also considering other land use designations that might better reflect existing uses and development patterns/densities and will develop a staff recommendation based on this additional information and Planning Commission input about whether Renton should continue its lower density policy approach in this area.